

Claims

1. A network of data switches each having a plurality of ports adapted for receiving and transmitting packets and arranged for transferring data packets internally between their ports according to address information in the packets,
5 the data switches being connected as an array by connections formed between some of the ports of pairs of the switches,
one of the data switches being a master switch for issuing commands to the other switches as control data packets,
the other data switches being slave data switches for recognising the
10 control data packets and operating based on the commands contained within them.
2. A method of operating a plurality of data switches each having a plurality of ports adapted for receiving and transmitting packets and arranged for transferring data packets internally between their ports according to
15 address information in the packets, the method including:
a master data switch among said switches using at least some of its ports to issue command packets to slave data switches among said switches;
the slave data switches using some of their ports to receive the command packets, recognising the command packets and implementing the
20 commands specified.
3. A method according to claim 2 in which the slave data switches identify if a command packet transmitted to them is intended to cause a command to be carried out at that switch, implementing the command if the determination is positive, and if the determination is negative passing the command packet
25 to any further slave switch to which it is connected.

4. A method according to claim 2 or claim 3 including an initiation stage in which the master chip establishes the topology of the network and assigns IDs to the slave switches, and an operation stage in which packets including the IDs pass between the switches within the network.